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RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS 1829
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SUBJECT: POSITIVE REACTION IN CHILE TO OBAMA'S ELECTION

¶1. Summary: Every Chilean daily on November 6 gave extensive coverage to reactions about Barack Obama's election, including remarks by President Bachelet and local political party leaders. The Ambassador also received calls about the election results from an exuberant Senate President Adolfo Zaldívar, Foreign Minister Foxley, and former Foreign Minister Juan Gabriel Valdez. Prominent Chileans, including former President Lagos and OAS Secretary General Insulza, made positive remarks about Obama's victory. Virtually all editorials commented on the significance of Barack Obama's election and its impact in the United States and the world, noting the high expectations for the next U.S. President. Many cited Bush administration's economic policies and foreign policy as factors in Obama's victory. Dailies also gave prominent coverage to President Bachelet's public statement congratulating the President-elect on his historic victory (see para 10). End Summary.

¶2. The Ambassador received phone calls on November 5 from Senate President Adolfo Zaldívar, Foreign Minister Foxley, and former Foreign Minister Juan Gabriel Valdes about the U.S. election results. All three saluted the election as a great demonstration of the depth of the U.S. democratic system and an inspirational event for Latin America and the world.

Editorials on Obama Victory

¶3. The following are editorial excerpts from Chile's leading dailies:

¶4. "Obama's Victory." "Barack Obama's victory as the first Afro-American President is an unquestionable landmark in U.S. history.... He also represents a different way of looking at international issues.... This implies a change in the government and has given way to enormous expectations in his country and the rest of the world, which poses a significant challenge for the newly-elected president.... In his campaign speeches, Obama has shown notable qualities, but he has also left several unanswered issues; he has not explained his ambiguity with regard to free trade agreements" (conservative, influential newspaper-of-record El Mercurio, circ. 129,000).

¶5. "Historical Outcome in the U.S. Presidential Election": "At a moment in which the United States seemed to be going through a severe identity crisis because of the vacuums and mistakes of its authorities, this election will give its leadership an injection of optimism and confidence that could restore the strength and efficiency of the government in a scenario that looks difficult both domestically and internationally, in the short-and mid-term" (conservative, independent La Tercera, circ. 101,000).

¶6. "Obama, Hope for Dialogue and Cooperation": "Obama was not elected for his race, but because he was the best candidate.... Two factors that explain his victory are his opposition to the war and rejection of the financial speculation that led to the crisis.... It won't be easy for Obama to fulfill his promises, especially because the Bush administration has stirred resentment against the United States. But as of now, Obama has the support of the large majority of the world's population.... In Chile, neoliberals have already expressed their doubts, because Obama has rejected the free trade agreement with Chile. But the basis for that view lies in the need to expand international commercial relations beyond the mere exchange of goods to promote the harmonious development of nations, including labor and environmental protection. The expectations of Obama are high... and he has asked for patience.... But what is clear is that the history of the United States and of the world changed as of yesterday" (government-owned, editorially independent La Nacion, circ. 4,200).

¶7. "Obama and Latin America": "The expectations about what the new White House occupant will do are even higher given the current international financial uncertainty. There is hope that in Chile's case he will move forward to, as President Bachelet said, 'work together to further strengthen the relationship among our peoples and seize not just the economic opportunities, but also the training, technological exchanges, and cultural developments that we share'" (business and financial daily Estrategia, circ. 30,000).

¶8. "The New U.S. President": "Obama has the enormous challenge of putting the United States back in the seat it deserves, moving away from the antibodies that the Bush administration's diplomacy created. The big question is how protectionist his foreign policy will be, especially since he addressed the possibility of renegotiating free trade agreements over, for example, environmental and labor provisions. These elements are especially important for South America in general, but especially for Chile" (business and financial daily Diario Financiero, circ. 30,000).

Chileans Upbeat on President-Elect Obama

¶9. The following are statements by prominent Chileans about the U.S. presidential election result:

-- Former President Ricardo Lagos: "With Obama there is a better chance for understanding in the world, which faces increasing unrest" (La Segunda, conservative, afternoon daily, circ. 33,000).

-- OAS Secretary General Jos Miguel Insulza: "There is no doubt that the United States will change.... There will be a fundamental change in U.S. policy from what it has been in the past years.... Obama is the best reflection of the hope for change" (La Segunda).

-- Minister Secretary General to the Presidency Jose Antonio Viera-Gallo: "Barack's election is as if someone opened the window to let in fresh air" (El Mercurio).

-- Socialist Party President Camilo Escalona: "The lesson is that solidarity is more important than greed" (El Mercurio).

-- PRSD President Jose Antonio Gomez: "He won with votes of young people and independents. That is the lesson we must note in Chile (El Mercurio).

-- UDI President Jovino Novoa: "This shows the strength of U.S. democracy" (El Mercurio).

-- RN President Carlos Larran: "It (Obama presidency) raises questions, for example, whether he will appoint judges based on their support of legal abortions" (El Mercurio).

-- PPD President Pepe Auth: "(This shows that) People vote for a road to the future and not events of the past" (El Mercurio).

-- PRI President Jaime Mulet: "Just change is possible when people participate, especially those who do not do so regularly, such as young people." (El Mercurio)

-- RN Senator Hernan Larrain: "Obama's victory was not only

expected, it is also healthy because it means a change in power" (La Nacion).

-- Communist Party Secretary General Guillermo Teillier: This is a good chance to observe what Obama will do.... The United States must change its politics in the world, end the wars in several parts of the globe and change its attitude toward Latin America... taking differences into account" (La Nacion).

-- PS President Camilo Escalona: The United States has moved the barriers as to what is possible, toward greater equity and less discrimination" (La Nacion).

President Bachelet: "A Historic Moment"

¶10. President Michelle Bachelet made very positive remarks about President-elect Obama during a function she attended on November 5:

¶11. "Let me take this opportunity to publicly congratulate the election of Barack Obama as the new President of the United States and to wish him, from this country far south in the Americas, success in his endeavors. This is a historic moment, because today, when the world faces serious challenges in areas as important to people's lives as the energy crisis, the economic crisis, and the food crisis, it is obvious that the entire international community requires new solutions and greater concern for those who are most vulnerable. And I am certain that Barack Obama is the expression of a nation's dream of a better future and one full of hope."

¶12. "I know that his main concerns are social justice and equal opportunity, which he has summarized in his slogans for 'change' and 'hope.' These are certainly the same principles that inspire us in Chile. I am confident that both countries will continue to work together to further strengthen the relationship among our peoples and take advantage of new opportunities, not just on economic issues, but also in regard to training, technological exchange, and the cultural development that we already have."

¶13. President Bachelet concluded expressing her "best wishes for all the people of the United States."

SIMONS